

Testimony on HB 584  
Senate Energy Committee  
March 12, 2009

My name is Arleen Boyd. I live in Fishtail, Montana.

I am speaking in support of House Bill 584.

We need your help.

In communities where wind development is likely, we need to understand wind projects and know what best practices currently are being used in their implementation.

We need to understand the impacts of wind development and have information to help us plan for those impacts.

We need the opportunity to provide people who want to do wind power development right to have the knowledge and tools to help them develop responsibly and provide leadership in their communities.

Experience in my community says that people want this information and need help getting it.

During the recent campaign for the legislature a young candidate who works for a wind energy company ran for Montana House District 60 on a platform whose major feature was wind energy development for economic development in Stillwater County. In an interview in the newspaper he touted potential tax revenue and jobs numbers that could only be achieved by adding the equivalent of several Judith Gap projects in our county.

The candidate was related to a local resident who had for some time talked of generating wind power for sale on his ranch on the Stillwater River. During that time a close neighbor of the relative saw an offer to buy his property withdrawn when the buyer heard of the potential for large wind turbines close to the home. The neighbor's property sold much later at auction for about half the amount of the original reported offer. As a result of the candidate's focus on the benefits of wind power and talk about the neighbor's misfortune, there was in our community both interest in the opportunity for wind development and concern about its impacts.

As the legislative campaign continued it became clear that our community knew almost nothing about wind power or how it might be implemented locally. Opinions varied dramatically, but there was little solid information for people to use to evaluate or back up their beliefs. Some ranchers saw wind as a cash crop and planned to take advantage of the opportunity with little or no concern about any potential impacts. Other ranchers and property owners were interested in the opportunity for wind development but really wanted to know how to do it right – without huge impacts on birds or any negative

impacts on their neighbors' financial interests. There were environmentalists with serious concerns about appropriate siting and other environmentalists who figured that any wind project was better than any fossil fuel alternative and therefore didn't want to hear any questions about wind turbines or new transmission lines. There were people who wanted regulation and those who opposed all regulation. Many people thought wind power projects already were regulated. I think we probably were a microcosm of the state.

The discussion still is very much alive in our area.

This bill would allow for a committee to spend time investigating wind projects, identifying best practices, and assembling a body of knowledge that would allow for reasonable civil discourse and provide information that would help lead to good decision-making in our communities. Since this would be a volunteer effort to provide information, not mandatory practices, it would give needed support to those who want to do things right and might even help them become leaders in their local areas. Please help us and vote for this bill.

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